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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 001963

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NSC FOR SHANNON AND MADISON
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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTIONS #31: ARMED FORCES TO PROVIDE SECURITY

11. (U) This is number 31 in our series on the Dominican presidential election:

ARMED FORCES TO PROVIDE SECURITY FOR ELECTIONS

(SBU) The Dominican military leadership has assured us the military will be on "model" nonpolitical behavior during the election and previewed preparations for providing security to the May 16 election. On March 22 in separate meetings State Secretary of the Armed Forces LTG Jose Miguel Soto Jimenez

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and Deputy J-2 BG Clase told us the newly constituted Electoral Police (Policia Electoral) will consist of some 7,000 military personnel from the three services and a larger number of National Police (PN), with a probable combined strength of 40,000-42,000. This will be higher than the 37,000 deployed in the 2002 legislative/municipal election because the number of voting tables (colegios electorales) has increased.

(SBU) President Mejia has given command to Army MG Elvio Guerrero Reyes. He and his command will come under the control of Central Election Board (JCE) president Luis Arias from 24 hours before the election until several days afterward (or until the JCE has resolved any disputes about election returns). On March 25 the military begin a week of training of military and police officers who will in turn train their units. The training operation is scheduled to be complete by early May.

(U) Electoral Police will wear distinctive armbands issued by the JCE. In general, two will be assigned to each voting table, though in locations where many tables share a location, a single guard will stand at each table, with others in the building on call if needed. The Electoral Police will guard JCE headquarters, regional facilities, the 134 municipal election boards where returns will be compiled and entered into the JCE computer system, and data transmission systems between the municipalities and the Santo Domingo headquarters.

(SBU) Military escorts will accompany movements of election materials and personnel between the municipal boards and the approximately 12,300 voting tables as well as between the municipalities and Santo Domingo. To assuring safe transit the entire Armed Forces will be made available to the JCE as needed, including land vehicles and aircraft. Soto said he might use light observation helicopters to transport ballots to and from remote areas (in our view, not such a good idea, given the tight seating in these helicopters). The JCE will have priority access to the GODR motor pool on and around election day. (One possible benefit: this could hinder government officials from using official vehicles to get transport voters.)

(SBU) Soto assured us that the Armed Forces would play "as impartial a role as possible" in the election process. He says he intends their behavior to be "a model for the region." He said he would propose two measures to the President in this regard:

-- that the Armed Forces be confined to their garrisons for one week prior to election day to prevent military personnel from participating in political marches or rallies and that all personnel be required to have short haircuts, so they would be easy to spot in any rallies, even if they are in mufti; and

-- that officers due for retirement but still on active duty for prestige reasons be immediately reassigned to reserve status (many are active in partisan politics).

(SBU) Soto said President Mejia had instructed him to allow the DATF free access to the military so as to confirm the forces' political neutrality. We are following up on that

invitation.

12. (U) Drafted by Bainbridge Cowell.

13. (U) This report and others in this series can be read on the SIPRNET at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/index.cfm> along with extensive other current material.
HERTELL